

Is Quran Really Unchanged?

Do we really have any evidence from the era of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم to prove this?

A historical and factual overview by

FARIS AL-KHATEEB

(Author of famous book “Lost Islamic History”)

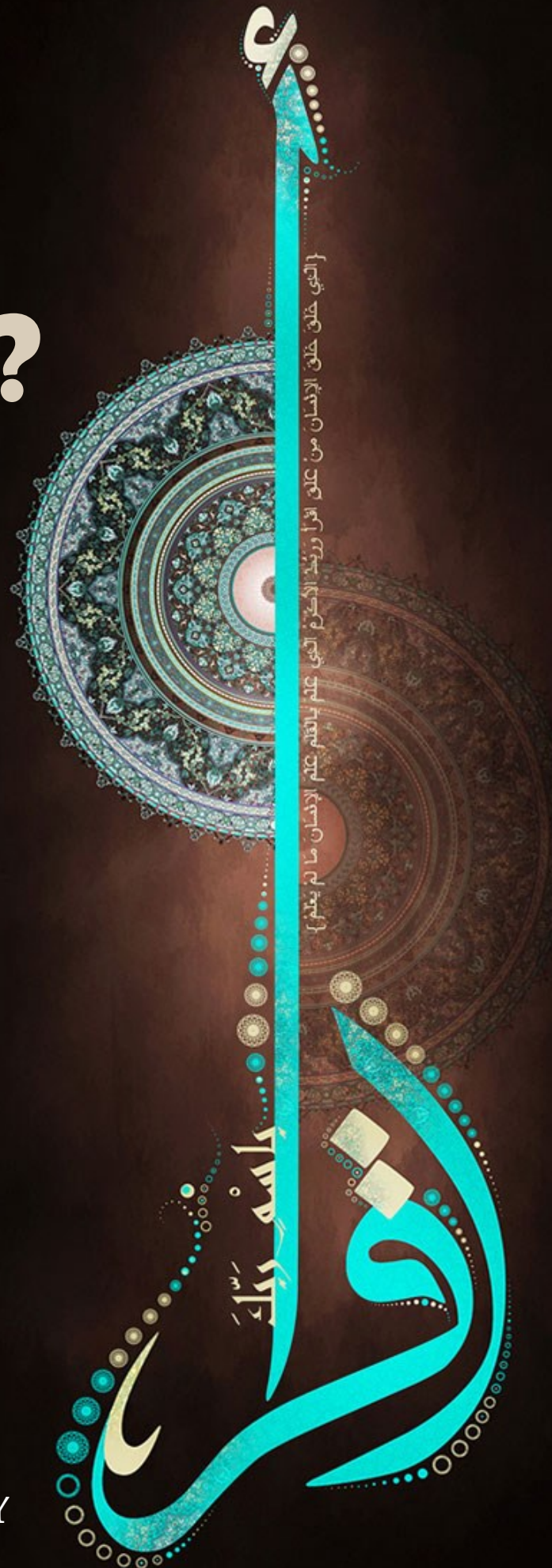
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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST BENEFICIENT, THE MOST MERCIFUL!

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“

[O You who Believe, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has sent on for tomorrow. Fear Allah, surely Allah is well-acquainted with what you do. And do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget their own souls. Such are the rebellious transgressors.]

(Al-Hashr 59:18-19)

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم
كل معروف صدقة، والدال على الخير كفاعله
(البخاري و مسلم)

من دعا إلى هدى كان له من الأجر مثل أجور من تبعه لا ينقص ذلك من أجورهم شيئاً
(مسلم)

وتعاونوا على البرِّ والتقوى ۖ ولا تعاونوا على الإثم والعدوان
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HADITH

“Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur’an and indeed, We will be its guardian.”

Surah Al Hijr, Verse 9

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This book is divided in two distinct parts.

***Part 1** Presents an overview of a recent discovery of the oldest Quranic manuscript which dates back to the very era it was revealed in. This adds to the evidence that Quran is completely preserved in its original form unlike any other scripture in world.*

***Part 2** Presents a historical overview of how Quran was preserved. It was not just the written manuscripts, it was memorized cover to cover by millions and millions of people through-out the ages and it will always be.*

THE WORLD'S OLDEST QURAN MANUSCRIPT

According to new research at the University of Birmingham¹, a collection of Quranic manuscripts held at the university may be the oldest in the world. Radiocarbon dating estimates that the manuscripts, which are written on animal skin, were written between 568 and 645 CE.

If the research is accurate, it means that the manuscripts were written at most just a few years after the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passed away in 632 CE, indicating it was probably transcribed by a Companion of his.²

¹ Sean Coughlan (2015) "'Oldest' Koran fragments found in Birmingham University". Available on 23-Jul-15 at:
<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-33436021>

² The tests, carried out by the Oxford University Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit, showed that the fragments, written on sheep or goat skin, were among the very oldest surviving texts of the Koran.

These tests provide a range of dates, showing that, with a probability of more than 95%, the parchment was from between 568 and 645.

"They could well take us back to within a few years of the actual founding of Islam," said David Thomas, the university's professor of Christianity and Islam.

"According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Muhammad received the revelations that form the Koran, the scripture of Islam, between the years 610 and 632, the year of his death."

Prof Thomas says the dating of the Birmingham folios would mean it was quite possible that the person who had written them would have been alive at the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

"The person who actually wrote it could well have known the Prophet Muhammad. He would have seen him probably, he would maybe have heard him preach. He may have known him personally - and that really is quite a thought to conjure with," he says.

The manuscript is written in the now extinct Hijazi script³, which lacked dots and vowel markings, making it difficult to read for someone not already familiar with the verses.⁴ By the late 600s, the Kufic script⁵ came to dominate Quranic manuscripts.

Below are scans of the manuscript along with links for further reading.

Prof Thomas says that some of the passages of the Koran were written down on parchment, stone, palm leaves and the shoulder blades of camels - and a final version, collected in book form, was completed in about 650. He says that "the parts of the Koran that are written on this parchment can, with a degree of confidence, be dated to less than two decades after Muhammad's death".

"These portions must have been in a form that is very close to the form of the Koran read today, supporting the view that the text has undergone little or no alteration and that it can be dated to a point very close to the time it was believed to be revealed."

3 The script is notably angular in comparison with other Arabic scripts and tends to slope to the right. The script does not yet contain any dots or diacritical marks: only the consonants are represented.

4 In order to allow comparison of text and appreciate the fact that text is preserved since its revelation, we have provided a comparative figure for this text and contemporary scripts known to general public.

5 Kufic script developed around the end of the 7th century in Kufa, Iraq, from which it takes its name. Until about the 11th century it was the main script used to copy Qur'ans. Professional copyists employed a particular form of kufic script for reproducing the other early surviving copies of the Qur'an, which were written on parchment and date from the 8th to 10th centuries. This copy being in hijazi script further proves the fact that it is from the very era of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

د عوا للرحمن و لدا و ما صنع للرحمن
 ار شيد و لدا ار ط من السموات و
 لا در الا ان الله خير عبدا و ما صنع
 و عدا لله عدا و كلمه الله يوم القيمة
 و كذا ان الذين امنوا و عملوا الصالحات
 سيدي لله الرحمن و كذا ان الله سميع
 عليم ان الله يفتن من يشاء و ما لدا و
 كه اهلنا و لله من امر و كل عرس منه من احد او
 بسم الله و كذا

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم و كذا ما اولها
 عليك الفوا لشيء الا تذكروه لم يحسن
 ترو لا من خلق الا در و السموات العلوية
 الرحمن على العرش استوى ان الله ماف السموات
 و ما في الارض و ما بينهما و ما تحت
 العرش و ان عرشنا بالعلو فان يشاء الله السوا
 و احسن الله لا اله الا هو له الاسماء
 احسن و هل انتك حدت مع مع اح
 و اناد انظر لاله امكثوا ان انفسنا
 و العلى انك مننا نفس او احد على
 لنا و هكذا فلما اتها بوكى لعمو
 ان اناد بك فاحلج بملكك انك ما
 لو ان المصير طوف و اننا الحرف

Verses 91-98 of Surat Maryam, followed by the first 12 verses of Surat Taha

MINGANA
AR
اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ فَذُو الْعَرْشِ وَمَنْ يُضِل
فَرِحْدًا وَكَيْدًا مَرِيدًا وَغَسَقَةَ الْفَجْرِ
دَقُودًا وَعَلَيْهِ كَاتِبُ الْبُرُودِ كَاتِبَاتُ
كِسْفَاتٍ وَكَلْبَةٌ بِسْطَرٍّ دَعَا لَوْ كُنْتُ
لَوْ أَطْلَعْتُ عَلَيْهِ لَوَيْتُ مِنْهُ فَرْدًا
لَمَلِكٍ مِنْهُ دَعِيًّا وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُتُهُ لَيْسًا
لَوْ أَسْمَهُ فَلِمْ مَنَّهُ كَمْ لَيْسَهُ فَاوَالَيْسَا
يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضِ يَوْمٍ فَاوَالَيْسَهُ أَعْلَمُ
لَيْسَهُ فَا يَتَّقُوا أَحَدًا كَمْ يَوْمٌ فَكَمْ فَكَمْ
الْحَمْدُ الْمَدِينَةُ فَسَطْرًا يَمَّا أَدْرَجْتَ طَعْمًا
فَلَمَّا نَكَبَ بِرُوحِهِ عَلَى السَّمَاءِ فَاتَّخَذَ
بِكُمْ أَحَدًا أَنْ تَهْتَكُوا كَلِمَاتِهِ فَاعْلَمُوا
لَوْ كُنْتُمْ كَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضِ كَوْمَةٍ فِي مَلَكُوتِهِ
أَنْ تَهْتَكُوا كَلِمَاتِهِ فَاعْلَمُوا
لَمَلِكٍ مِنْهُ دَعِيًّا وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُتُهُ لَيْسًا
لَمَلِكٍ مِنْهُ دَعِيًّا وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُتُهُ لَيْسًا
لَمَلِكٍ مِنْهُ دَعِيًّا وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُتُهُ لَيْسًا
لَمَلِكٍ مِنْهُ دَعِيًّا وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُتُهُ لَيْسًا
لَمَلِكٍ مِنْهُ دَعِيًّا وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُتُهُ لَيْسًا
لَمَلِكٍ مِنْهُ دَعِيًّا وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُتُهُ لَيْسًا
لَمَلِكٍ مِنْهُ دَعِيًّا وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُتُهُ لَيْسًا

Verses 17 to 23 of Surat al-Kahf

كَيْلَ أَنْ يَفْعَلَ بِكَ عَذَابَ الْآلِ الْأُولَى
وَأَذْكُرُ بِكَ آدَامَ سَبَّ وَفُلِحَ سَمِيعُ
بَعْدَ دِينِ لَا وَبِمَنْ هَدَا سُبْحَانَ وَكَيْلَ
فِي كَلِمَةٍ تَلْفَ مَا تَدْرُسُ وَأَذْكُرُ
سُبْحَانَ فَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مَا لِي تَقُولَ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَصْدَقُ وَأَسْمَى مَا
لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ مَوْلَى وَلَا تَسْكُ فِي حِكْمَةٍ
أَحْكَمَ وَأَنْتَ مَا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كَلِمَةٍ
بِكَ لَا مَدَادَ لِكَلِمَتِهِ وَأَنْ يَحْدِثَ دُونَ
مَلِكًا وَأَصْبَرَ نَفْسًا مِنْ أَلْدَى تَدْعُو
رِدْبَهُ بِالْعَدْوَى وَالْعَسَى تَدْعُو وَحَدِّ
وَلَا تَعْدُ عَسَاكَ عَسَى أَنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ
وَالدُّنْيَا وَلَا تَطْعَمُ مَا عَمِلْنَا فَلْيَدْعُ
نَا وَأَنْتَ هُوَ تَدْعُو وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ وَطَلَّ
الْحَوْمِ دَيْكَةً فَمِنْ مَا فُلِحُوا وَمِنْ مَا فُلِحُوا
أَنَا أَعْتَدُ بِاللَّطْمِ نَادَا أَلْحَاظُ لَهُمْ
سَوْدَ قَهْرًا وَأَرْسَلْنَا تَلَاتُوا بِمَا كَالْمَدَى
سَمِعَ الْوَحْيَ بِنَسْرِ السُّرْبِ وَبِاتِ
نَهْمًا أَنْ أَلْدَى أَمْنُوا وَعَمَلُوا
لَا تَحْمِلُ أَعْدَى مِنْ أَعْمَلًا
عَنْ عَدَى مِنْ عَمَلِهِ إِلَّا تَلْفَ
مِنْ أَسْوَدَ مِنْ كَلِمَةٍ وَتَلْسُونَ تَلْسًا
وَأَسْتَبْرِي مَكْرَ قَهْرًا

Verses 23 to 31 of Surat al-Kahf

HOW DOES THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPT OF THE QUR'AN COMPARE TO TODAY'S QUR'AN?

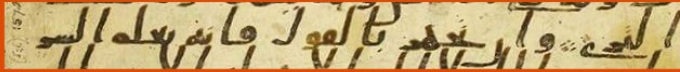
ilmfeed.com

Comparison of Early Qur'anic Manuscript with Today's Qur'an

Manuscript:
University of Birmingham
(Mingana Collection)

Script: Hijazi

Date: Around 645CE / 24AH



الثَّوَى وَإِنْ تَجَهَّرَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ



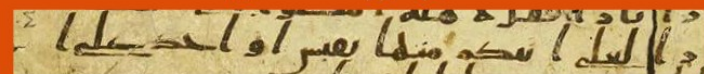
وَأَخْفَى اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ



وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى إِذْ



رَأَى نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا



لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدٍ عَلَى



النَّارِ هُدًى فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَى



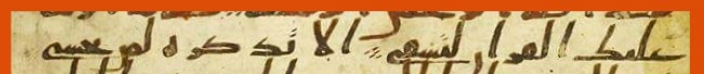
إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِأَ



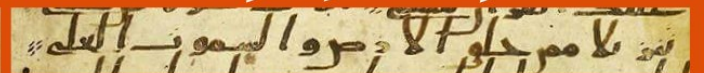
لُؤَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طَوًى وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ...



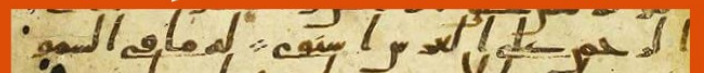
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ طه مَا أَنْزَلْنَا



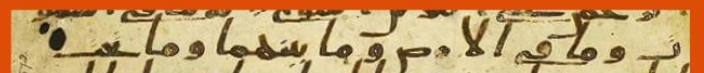
عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى إِلَّا تَذَكَّرَ لِمَنْ يَخْشَى



تَنْزِيلًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ الْعُلَى



الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ



وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ

The above graphic shows that they are identical. No words or letters are out of place. Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the word of God and hold it to be a living miracle.

“The recent carbon dating of an ancient Quranic manuscript at the University of Birmingham has now added even more proof regarding the unparalleled degree of certainty with which the Quran has been preserved. These folios have been Carbon 14 dated to within the same time frame, or perhaps shortly after, our Prophet ﷺ. In other words, if this parchment wasn't written for/by a Companion, then it was written by/for a student of one of the Companions.”

“This collection, called the 'Mingana collection' (after the researcher Alphonse Mingana, d. 1937) was purchased by Mingana in either Iraq or Syria, almost a hundred years ago. Edward Cadbury, the founder of the famous chocolate company, sponsored Mingana's trips to the Middle East. His collection, which includes hundreds of manuscripts, is primarily housed at the University of Birmingham, in the UK.”

Sheikh Yasir Qadhi, Phd



HOW DO WE KNOW THE QURAN IS UNCHANGED?

INTELLECTUAL AWAKENING IN EUROPE AND ITS MUSLIM ROOT:

The awakening of Europe from the Dark Ages and the subsequent intellectual enlightenment of the 1600s-1800s was one of the most powerful movements in modern history. It brought to Europe a dedication to empirical science, critical thinking, and intellectual discourse. Much of this was imported from the Muslim world's intellectual history, through Muslim entry points into Europe such as Spain, Sicily, and Southeast Europe.

AGE OF IMPERIALISM:

This rise in intellectual work coincided with a period of European imperialism and colonialism over the Muslim world. European nations such as England, France, and Russia slowly conquered portions of the Muslim world, dividing it among themselves.

RISE OF ORIENTALISM:

Thus the intellectual enlightenment, coupled with imperialism over the Muslim world, led to what the Europeans saw as a critical study of Islam, its history, beliefs, and teachings. This movement is known as Orientalism. One of the greatest shortcomings of Orientalism, however, is the analysis of Islamic history on European terms, discarding the centuries of

academic work put in by great Muslim minds since the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

One of the most dangerous aspects of Orientalism was the European study of the origins of the Quran. Since it is well accepted in academic circles that both the Torah of the Jews and the New Testament of the Christians have changed over the centuries, European academics erroneously believed the same must be true about the Quran. Their efforts to prove their belief that the Quran has been changed and is not authentic led to studies and works of questionable intention and low scholarly merit.

PRESERVATION OF QURAN

This article will critically analyze the origins of the Quran, its transmission, and its compilation, to understand why Muslims accept the copies of the Quran they have in their homes to be the exact same words that were spoken by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the early 600s AD.

THE PROMISE TO PROTECT

Muslims believe that Allah has already promised to protect the Quran from the change and error that happened to earlier holy texts. Allah states in the Quran in Surat al-Hijr, verse 9:

“Indeed, it is We who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be it’s guardian.”

For Muslims, this verse of promise from Allah is enough to know that He will indeed protect the Quran from any errors

and changes over time. For people who do not accept the authenticity of the Quran in the first place, however, clearly this verse cannot serve as proof of its authenticity, since it is in the Quran itself. It is from here that the academic discussion begins.

NARRATION OF THE QURAN TO THE COMPANIONS

The revelation of the Quran was not an isolated event in time. It was a constant stream of verses descending to Muhammad ﷺ throughout the 23 years of his prophet hood in Makkah and Madinah. The Prophet ﷺ appointed numerous Companions of his to serve as scribes, writing down the latest verses as soon as they were revealed. ⁶

Mu'awiya ibn Abu Sufyan and Zaid bin Thabit were among the scribes who had this duty. For the most part, new verses would

⁶ There are numerous narrations about this aspect:

'Some people visited Zaid Ibn Thabit R.A. (one of the scribes of the Prophet) and asked him to tell them some stories about Allah's Messenger ﷺ. He replied: "I was his (Prophet's ﷺ) neighbor, and when the inspiration descended on him he sent for me and I went to him and wrote it down for him..." (Tirmidhi, Mishkat)

Narrated by al-Bara': There was revealed 'Not equal are those believers who sit (home) and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah' (4:95). The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Call Zaid for me and let him bring the board, the ink pot and scapula bone.' Then he (Prophet ﷺ) said: 'Write: Not equal are those believers...' (Sahih Bukhari)

Zaid R.A. is reported to have said: 'We use to compile the Qur'an from small scraps in the presence of the Apostle ﷺ'. (Suyuti, Itqan)

'The Prophet ﷺ, while in Madinah, had about 48 scribes who use to write for him'. (M.M.Azami, Kuttab al-Nabi, Beirut, 1974)

be written on scraps of bone, hide, or parchment, since paper had not yet been imported from China. It is important to note that Muhammad ﷺ would have the scribes read back the verses to him after writing them down so he can proofread and make sure there were no errors.⁷

To further ensure that there were no errors, Muhammad ﷺ ordered that no one records anything else, not even his words, *hadith*, on the same sheet as Quran. Regarding the sheets that the Quran was being written down on, he stated "and whoever has written anything from me other than the Quran should erase it"⁸. This was done to ensure that no other words were accidentally thought to be part of the text of the Quran.

It is important to understand, however, that physical writing down of the Quran was not the main way that the Quran was recorded.

Arabia in the 600s was an oral society⁹. Very few people could read and write, thus huge emphasis was placed on ability to memorize long poems, letters, and other messages. Before Islam, Makkah was a centre of Arabic poetry. Annual festivals

7 The Prophet ﷺ also listened to the recitation of the Qur'an by the Companions: 'Allah Apostle ﷺ said to me (Abdullah bin Mas'ud R.A.): "Recite (of the Quran) to me". I said: "Shall I recite it to you although it had been revealed to you?!" He Said: "I like to hear (the Quran) from others". So I recited Sura-an-Nisa' till I reached: "How (will it be) then when We bring from each nation a witness and We bring you (O Muhammad ﷺ) as a witness against these people?"' (4:41) 'Then he said: "Stop!" Behold, his eyes were shedding tears then'. (Bukhari)

8 Sahih Muslim, al-Zuhd:72

9 Michael Zwettler (1978), "The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry", p.14. Ohio State Press

were held every year that brought together the best poets from all over the Arabian Peninsula. Exuberant attendees would memorize the exact words that their favourite poets recited and quote them years and decades later.

Thus, in this type of oral society, the vast majority of the Companions learned and recorded the Quran by memorization. In addition to their natural ability to memorize, the rhythmic nature of the Quran made its memorization much easier.

The Quran was not narrated to just a few select Companions. It was heard and memorized by hundreds and thousands of people, many of them travellers. Thus, chapters and verses of the Quran quickly spread during the life of the Prophet ﷺ to all corners of the Arabian Peninsula. Those who had heard verses from the Prophet ﷺ would go and spread them to tribes far away, who would also memorize them. In this way, the Quran achieved a literary status known among the Arabs as *mutawatir*. *Mutawatir* means that it was so vastly disseminated to so many different groups of people, who all had the same exact wording, that it is inconceivable that that any one person or group could have falsified it. Some sayings of the Prophet ﷺ are known to be authentic through it being *mutawatir*, but the entire Quran itself is accepted as being *mutawatir*, because of its wide spread during the life of the Prophet ﷺ through oral means.

COLLECTION AFTER THE DEATH OF THE PROPHET

We have thus far seen that the way the Quran was taught to the numerous Companions of the Prophet ﷺ prevented it from being subject to the protection of a few people. As verses

became widespread across the Islamic world, it was impossible for those verses to be changed without Muslims in other parts of the world noticing and correcting them.¹⁰

Furthermore, during the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the angel Jibreel would recite the entire Quran with him once a year, during Ramadan.¹¹ When the Quran was finished being revealed near the end of the Prophet ﷺ's life, he made sure that numerous companions knew the entire Quran by heart.¹²

During the reigns of the first caliphs, however, a need to compile all the verses into a central book arose. Taking preemptive action, the caliphs who ruled the Muslim world after the death of the Prophet ﷺ feared that if the number of people who had the Quran memorized dipped too low, the community would be in danger of losing the Quran forever. As a result, the first caliph, Abu Bakr, who ruled from 632 to 634, ordered a committee be organized, under the leadership of Zaid bin Thabit, to collect all the written pieces of Quran that were spread throughout the Muslim community. The plan was

10 It is estimated that there are at least 10 million Muslims alive today who have memorised the entire Qur'an in its original Arabic language. Many of these memorisers lead their Muslim communities in prayer five times a day, every day, in mosques throughout the world. These leaders of prayer are known as Imams and typically there is at least one Imam assigned to each of the estimated 2.5 million mosques throughout the world. (<http://manyprophetsonemessage.com/2014/01/08/the-miraculous-preservation-of-the-quran/>)

11 'Gabriel used to repeat the recitation of the Qur'an with the Prophet (S) once a year, but he repeated it twice with him in the year he (Prophet) died'. Sahih Bukhari

12 In his article "COMPANION MEMORIZERS OF QUR'AN - Refutation of False Claims Made by Christian Missionaries", Dr. G. F. Haddad mentions about 100 companions who memorized the Quran completely.

to collect them all into one central book that could be preserved in case the people who had the Quran memorized died out.

Zaid R.A. was very meticulous about who he accepted verses from. Because of the enormous responsibility of not accidentally altering the words of the Quran, he only accepted pieces of parchment with Quran on them had to have been written down in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ and there had to be two witnesses who can attest to that fact.¹³ These fragments of Quran that he collected were each compared with the memorized Quran itself, ensuring that there was no discrepancy between the written and oral versions.

When the task was completed, a finalized book of all the verses was compiled and presented to Abu Bakr, who secured it in the archives of the young Muslim state in Madinah. It can be assumed with certainty that this copy that Abu Bakr had matched exactly the words that Muhammad ﷺ had spoken because of the numerous memorizers of Quran present in Madinah, coupled with the disseminated pieces of parchment on which it was recorded. Had there been discrepancies, the people of Madinah would have raised the issue. There is no record of any opposition to Abu Bakr R.A.'s project or its outcome.

THE MUS'HAF OF UTHMAN R.A.

During the caliphate of Uthman R.A., from 644 to 656, a new issue regarding the Quran arose in the Muslim community: pronunciation. During the life of the Prophet ﷺ, the Quran was revealed in seven different dialects – *qira'as*. The dialects differed slightly in their pronunciation of certain letters

¹³ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*

and words, but the overall meaning was unchanged. These seven dialects were not an innovation brought in by corruption of the Quran in later years, as it was mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ himself, and there are numerous sayings of his describing the authenticity of all seven dialects that are recorded in the hadith compilations of Bukhari and Muslim. The reason for there being different dialects for the Quran was to make it easier for different tribes around the Arabian Peninsula to learn and understand it.

During Uthman's reign, people coming into the Muslim world at its periphery, in places like Persia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and North Africa were beginning to learn the Quran. An issue arose for them when it came to pronunciation of words, as they would hear different Arabs pronouncing the same verses differently. Although the different pronunciations were sanctioned by the Prophet ﷺ and there was no inherent harm in people reciting and teaching them, it led to confusion among new non-Arab Muslims.

Uthman responded by commissioning a group to come together, organize the Quran according to the dialect of the tribe of Quraysh (the Prophet ﷺ's tribe), and spread the Qurayshi dialect to all parts of the empire.¹⁴ Uthman's team (which again included Zaid bin Thabit) compiled a Quran into one book (known as a mus'haf - from the word for page, sahifa) based on first hand manuscripts along with the memories of the best Quran reciters of Madinah. This mus'haf was then compared with the copy that Abu Bakr

¹⁴ The impetus to do this was provided by Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman R.A. when he returned to Madinah after observing regional differences. He said to him, "Take this Ummah in hand before they differ about the Book like the Christians and Jews." So Uthman R.A. sent for the copy made by Abu Bakr which was in the possession of 'Umar's daughter, Hafsa.

commissioned, to make sure there were no discrepancies. Uthman then ordered numerous copies of the mus'haf to be made, which were sent to far off provinces throughout the empire, along with reciters who would teach the masses the Quran.



A copy of Uthman's Mus'haf, kept in Topkapi Palace in Istanbul

Because the Quran was now compiled and being produced on a regular basis, there was no need for the numerous fragments of verses that people had in their possession. He thus ordered that those fragments be destroyed so they cannot be used in the future to cause confusion among the masses. Although Orientalists use this incident to try to prove the erroneous claim that there were some discrepancies that Uthman R.A. wanted to eliminate, that is a simplistic way of looking at the event. The entire community in Madinah, including numerous eminent Companions such as Ali ibn Abi Talib, willingly went along with this plan, and no objections were voiced.¹⁵Had he been

¹⁵ Mus'ab bin Sa'd asserts that the people were pleased with Uthman's decision; at the very least no one voiced any objections. Numerous reports confirm this unanimous approval, including 'Ali bin Abi Talib who says:

“By Allah, he did what he did with these fragments in the presence of us all [i.e. and none of us objected].” [Ibn Abi Dawud, al-Masahif, p. 22]

eliminating legitimate differences, the people of Madinah would have surely objected or even revolted against Uthman R.A., neither of which happened. Instead, the mus'haf of Uthman R.A. was accepted by the entire community as authentic and correct.

THE SCRIPT OF THE QURAN

Another complaint that Orientalists make deals with the fact that the Mus'haf of Uthman lacked any diacritical marks (dots that differentiated the letters and vowel markings). The letters seen in his mus'haf are thus just the skeletal base of Arabic letters. For example, the word قيل (he said), without diacritical marks would look like this: قیل. According to the claims of Orientalists, a reader can then read the word as فیل (elephant), قبل (before), or قبّل (he kissed). Clearly, reading such different words would have a huge difference in meaning. Orientalists such as the Australian professor of the early 1900s, Arthur Jeffery, claim that Uthman's copy of the Quran, with its lack of diacritical marks made it possible for variant readings, and thus variant meanings to exist, making the Quran today not authentic.¹⁶

In the West, when we think of burning it has negative connotations, such as hiding evidence. The reader must understand that this is a common practice in Islam, as we can't just discard Qur'anic verses by throwing them away in the rubbish, they have to be burnt or buried out of respect for the content. This act done by Uthman was not something new like critics claim, it was also done during the time of the Prophet:

"The Prophet commanded the companions, 'Do not write anything from me except the Qur'an. Whoever writes anything besides the Qur'an should destroy it' [Sahih Muslim, al-Zuhd al-Raqaiq, #5326]

16 When 'Uthmaan made copies of the Qur'aan, he did so according to one style (harf), but he omitted the dots and vowel points so that some other

There are numerous flaws in this argument:

First, the fact that Uthman sent reciters with his copies of the mus'haf is of huge importance. We must remember that the main way the Quran was preserved was orally, and the written copies were only meant to be a supplement to oral recitation. If someone already has a verse memorized, the skeletal letters in a copy of Uthman's mus'haf served only as a visual aid when reciting. To illustrate this example, we can look at the following inscription on the inside of the Dome of the Rock, in Jerusalem. The building was built in the late 600s and features one of the oldest calligraphic inscriptions in Arabic on the inside of the building, written in the same Kufic script as Uthman's mus'haf:

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا
شَرِیْكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمَلِكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ یَحِیُّ وَیَمِیْتُ وَهُوَ
عَلَى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ مُحَمَّدٌ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلُهُ

For someone familiar with the Arabic language and some basic common phrases regarding the supremacy of Allah, it is easy to make out what this part of the inscription says:

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا
شَرِیْكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمَلِكُ وَ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ یَحِیُّ وَ یَمِیْتُ وَ هُوَ
عَلَى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ مُحَمَّدٌ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلُهُ

styles could also be accommodated. So the Mus-haf that was copied in his time could be read according to other styles, and whatever styles were accommodated by the Mus-haf of 'Uthmaan remained in use, and the styles that could not be accommodated fell into disuse. (From islamqa.info, a website that operates under the supervision of noble Sheikh, Salih Al Munajjid). This clearly shows that it for different reading style of SAME WORDS and by no means for different variations in meanings.

In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate.

There is no god but God. He is One. He has no associate.

Unto Him belongeth sovereignty and unto Him belongeth praise.

He quickeneth and He giveth death; and He has Power over all things.

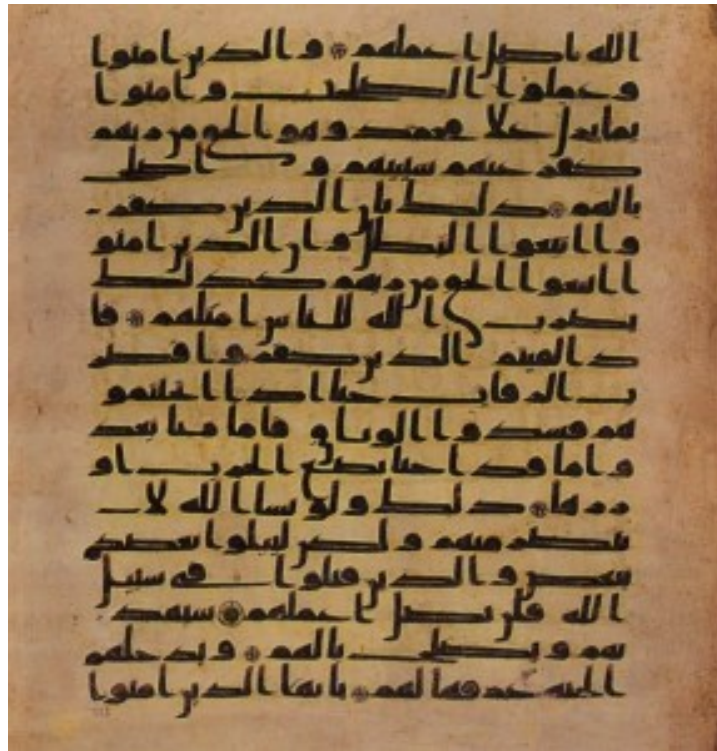
Muhammad is the servant of God and His Messenger.¹⁷



A view of above mentioned inscriptions inside Dome of Rock

In the same way as this passage, the mus'haf of Uthman R.A. could be easily read by someone who was familiar with the verses and the Arabic script. Thus the claim that the lack of diacritical marks makes it impossible to know what the original word was is clearly baseless.

17 <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/DoTR.html>



A page from the Uthmani Mus'haf showing part of Surat Muhammad. Note the lack of diacritical marks.

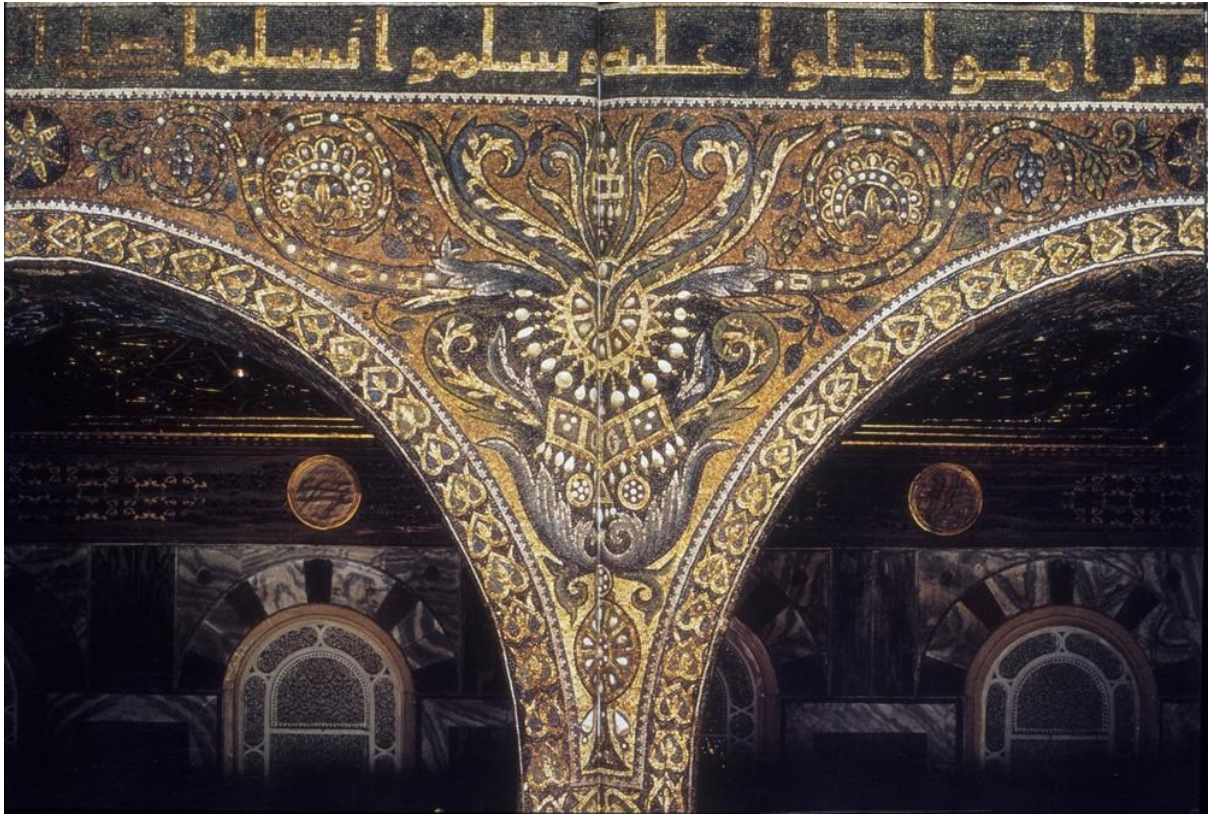
The second problem with the claims of Orientalists like Jeffery deals with the idea of reading a word completely wrong based on the lack of diacritical marks. Let us assume for a moment that there are no reciters around to explain how a verse should be read from Uthman R.A.'s mus'haf and someone comes across the word *فل*. As we stated earlier, this can be a number of different words based on where the diacritical marks are. However, from context clues, an educated reader can easily figure out what word it is supposed to be. It is almost impossible for a reader to replace the word "before" with "elephant" and have the sentence still make sense. While in some cases a reader may accidentally replace one word with another that still makes sense, these occasions are rare with the way the Arabic language is set up, and all that is still assuming there are no Quranic reciters around to guide the reader.

Over time, during the 700s and 800s, diacritical marks began being added to the mus'hafs throughout the Muslim world. This was done as the Muslim world shifted from an oral to a written society, to further facilitate reading from a copy of the Quran, and to eliminate errors by people who did not already know the verses they were reading. Today, almost all modern mus'hafs include diacritical marks on the skeletal letters along with vowel markings to make reading easier.

THE ISNAD SYSTEM

One of the most pressing issues in the eyes of the early Muslims was the protection of the sanctity of the Quran. Numerous times throughout the Quran and sayings of the Prophet ﷺ, the Muslims are reminded that the Jews and Christians corrupted their texts over time, which now cannot be taken as authentic. As a result, early Muslims developed a system for ensuring that the Quran and hadith would not be subject to change by human error, either intentional or unintentional.

The system that developed is known as the Isnad system. The Isnad system emphasized the *Sanad*, of a particular saying. For example, in the hadith compilation of Bukhari, each hadith is preceded by a chain of narrators that goes from Bukhari back to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This chain is known as a *Sanad*. To ensure that the hadith is authentic, each narrator in the chain must be known to be reliable, have a good memory, be trustworthy, and have other righteous qualities.



Part of the Arabic inscription in the Kufic script inside the Dome of the Rock, built in 691.

The early Islamic community placed huge emphasis on this system for determining the authenticity of hadith as well as verses from the Quran. If someone were to claim to have had a verse that was not in the canonical text of Uthman R.A.'s mus'haf, scholars would look at the chain that person claimed went back to the Prophet ﷺ and determined from it if there was a chance that it was authentic. Clearly, anyone forging verses of the Quran would not be able to connect it to the Prophet ﷺ, and his/her claim would be discounted according to the Isnad system.

The Isnad system thus worked to preserve the sanctity of the Quran as well as the hadith, as it prevented people from making erroneous claims that could then be accepted as fact. Through the focus on the reliability of the *Sanad*, the reliability

of the verses or hadith themselves could be ascertained. Zaid bin Thabit R.A. used a proto-Isnad system in his work compiling the Quran during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, and the growth of the Isnad system in subsequent decades helped protect the text from being altered in any way.

CONCLUSIONS

This article is not meant to be a fully exhaustive study of the history of the Quran. The scholarship of hundreds of people throughout Islamic history to ensure the sanctity of the Quran cannot be boiled down to a few thousand words. However, it is clear through the introductory issues mentioned here that the text of the Quran clearly was not altered from the time of Muhammad ﷺ to the present day.¹⁸ The fact that it was so widespread during his life helped ensure that any malicious attempts to change the words of the holy book would be futile.

¹⁸ This legacy of memorisation has continued throughout Islamic history to this day. It is not just the core text of the Qur'an that is memorised, the rules and regulations for pronouncing each individual letter is also memorised. This ensures that Muslims not only recite the same content as Prophet Muhammad, but also in the same style (stopping points, intonation, rhythm etc).

Muslims that gain mastery in this field are known as Qurra, which literally means 'reciters'. Among them are some who have attained an ijazah. An ijazah, literally meaning 'permission', is a certificate used primarily to indicate that one has been authorised by a higher authority to transmit a certain subject or text of Islamic knowledge. This usually implies that the student has learned this knowledge through face-to-face interactions "at the feet" of the teacher. In a formal, written ijazah, the teacher granting the certificate usually includes a sanad (or chain) containing his or her scholarly lineage of teachers back to the Prophet Muhammad, a later admired scholar, or the author of a specific book. So in the context of Qur'an memorisation, it means that the memoriser has become a living link among the many links in the unbroken chain of memorisers going all the way to Prophet Muhammad.

The meticulous compilation of the text by Abu Bakr and Uthman served as a backup system in case the oral preservation of the Quran was lost. Finally, the isnad system helped ensure any claims to add to or remove from the Quran could not pass by a scholarly process that was central to the preservation of Islam itself.

In conclusion, the claims of Orientalists, that the Quran has been changed overtime as the Bible and Torah have, are clearly misleading. There is no evidence backing up the idea that the Quran has changed, and attempts to prove that it has are based on rudimentary and uneducated understandings of the history of the Quranic text.¹⁹

19 As a matter of fact, numerous western non-Muslim scholars also appreciate the preservation of Quran.

Here are just a few examples of non-Muslim religious and textual scholars who testify to the preservation of the Qur'an:

A.T. Welch, a non-Muslim Orientalist, writes:

“For Muslims the Qur'an is much more than scripture or sacred literature in the usual Western sense. Its primary significance for the vast majority through the centuries has been in its oral form, the form in which it first appeared, as the “recitation” chanted by Muhammad to his followers over a period of about twenty years... The revelations were memorized by some of Muhammad's followers during his lifetime, and the oral tradition that was thus established has had a continuous history ever since, in some ways independent of, and superior to, the written Qur'an... Through the centuries the oral tradition of the entire Qur'an has been maintained by the professional reciters (Qurraa). Until recently, the significance of the recited Qur'an has seldom been fully appreciated in the West.”

Leading Orientalist Kenneth Cragg reflects that:

“...this phenomenon of Qur'anic recital means that the text has traversed the centuries in an unbroken living sequence of devotion. It cannot, therefore, be handled as an antiquarian thing, nor as a historical document out of a distant past. The fact of hifdh (Qur'anic memorization) has made

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the Qur'an a present possession through all the lapse of Muslim time and given it a human currency in every generation, never allowing its relegation to a bare authority for reference alone."

The story of compilation of The Holy QURAN

The process of collecting the Holy Quran in one single medium where it had been scattered in various media.

During Prophet Mohammad's ﷺ life the Holy Quran was preserved in two ways:

- 1- Memory of the noble companions of the Prophet ﷺ.
- 2- Scattered in different written forms.



Prophet's demise
632 AD



70 memorizers were martyred in the battle of Al Yamamah, which led Abu Bakr (the first Caliph) to request Zaid Bin Thabit (scribe of the Prophet) to gather the whole Quran in a single compilation.

632 AD

1

Zaid's candidates and conditions:

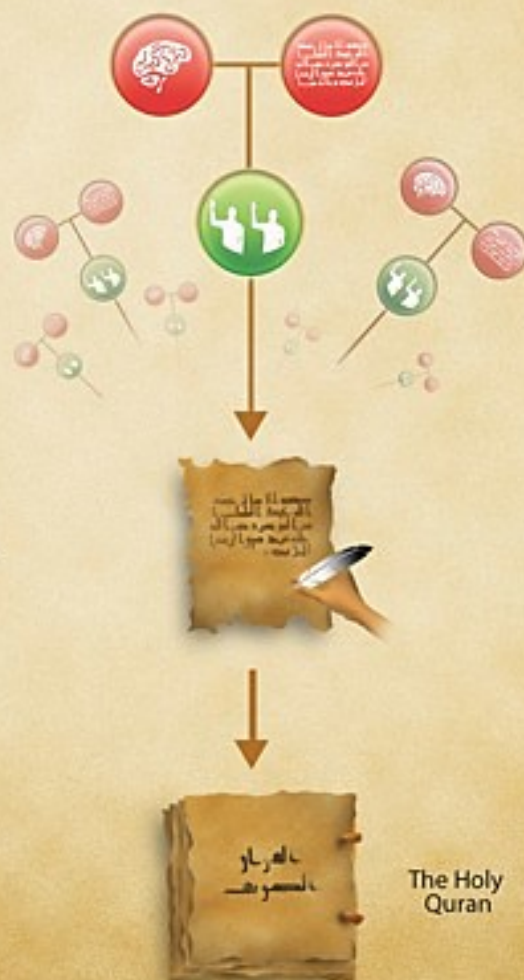
- 1- Each verse should be both written and memorized.
- 2- Two witnesses of it being written under supervision of the prophet ﷺ.

2

Zaid (proficient reciter and memorizer) wrote the script that passed the conditions.

3

Zaid compiled and ordered chapters and verses the same way as the prophet Mohammad ﷺ had commanded.



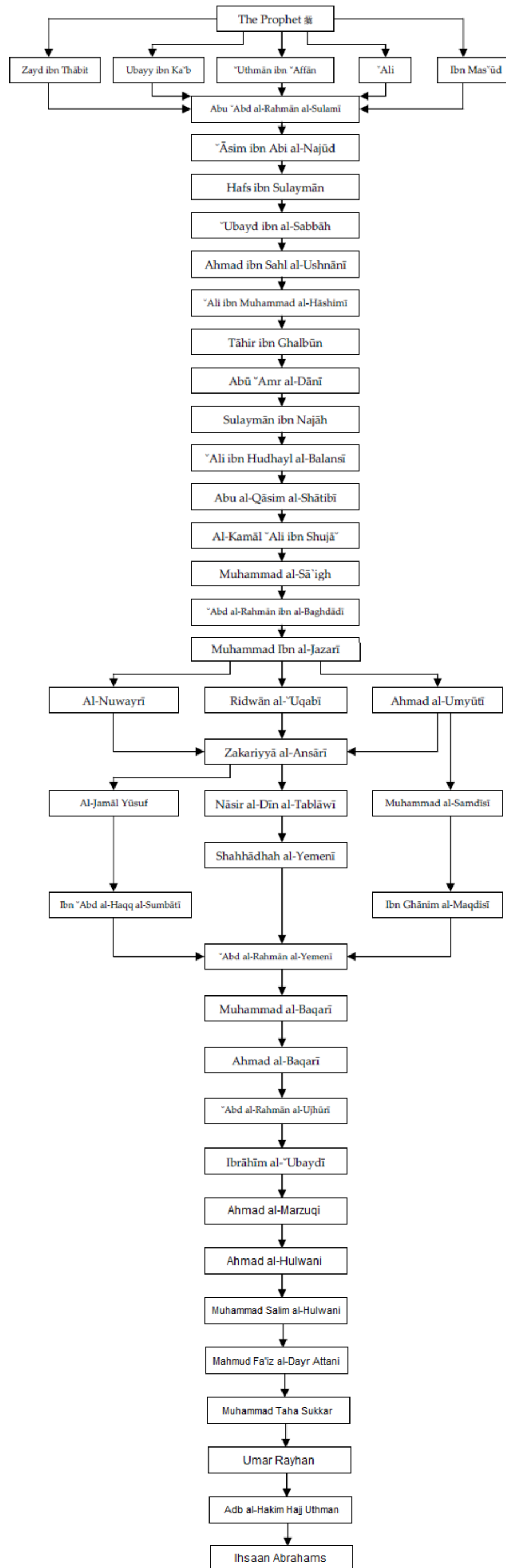
1.5 year

633 AD

634 AD

TRACEABILITY IN TRADITIONAL IJAZAH/ ISNAD SYSTEM OF QURANIC MEMORIZATION ENSURING AUTHENTICITY AND CORRECTNESS IN ALL ASPECTS

Example: Here is an example of an ijazah obtained by Sheikh Ihsaan Ibrahm in in South Africa



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَعَلَىٰ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ
سَلَامٌ مِّمَّا بَدَأَ
خَلْقَ الْبَرِيَّةِ
وَعَلَىٰ آلِ الْبَرَاءَةِ
إِنَّهُم بِئْسَ الرَّجِيءُ

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